

# **EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT**

**East Providence City Hall**

**145 Taunton Avenue**

**East Providence, Rhode Island 02914**

## **School Committee Meeting**

**March 13, 2007**

### **Open Session**

**Mrs. Morris called the meeting to order at 6:30PM. All School Committee members were present: Robert Faria, Eileen Lovett, David Medeiros, Steven Santos, and Mildred Morris. Also present: Dr. Jacqueline Forbes, Superintendent of Schools and Andrew Thomas, Esq. A motion was made by Mr. Faria to move to Executive Session in accordance with RI General Laws, Section 42-46-5 (a) (1) Personnel, (a) (2) Litigation, seconded by Mr. Medeiros. Vote 5-0.**

**Mrs. Morris called the public session to order at 7:30PM. A motion was made to return to open session and to seal the minutes of the Executive Session by Mrs. Lovett, seconded by Mr. Medeiros.**

**Vote 5-0.**

**Mr. Medeiros led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and a Moment of Silence was observed.**

**Record of Previous Meetings – A motion was made by Mr. Medeiros to approve the minutes of the February 8, 2007 and February 13, 2007 meetings, seconded by Mr. Faria. Vote 5-0.**

**Chair's Report – Mrs. Morris reported that she had attended many wonderful events recently held in the schools, such as the All City School Concert, The Little Shop of Horrors Play performed at Martin Middle, and Sports Night, just to name a few.**

**Curriculum Update – Mr. Daft reported on the Senior Project requirement; in the final year at the high school students must complete this requirement as part of the Project Based Graduation Requirement or PBGR requirement. Two students attended to explain their projects; one project finished and one in process. Dr. Caswell introduced Kayla Carvallaro, a junior who completed her senior project a year early on how the Station Fire impacted local fire laws; she would like to be a firefighter and will be producing a documentary on firefighting. Morgan Johnson, enrolled in the med tech program at the CTC, is interested in becoming a physician and shadowed a nurse in the neonatal unit at Women and Infants Hospital; her project compared premature to full-term babies. The project requirement incorporates four points: research, project, portfolio and presentation. Dr. Caswell advised that on June 5, 2007 and June 8, 2007, students will be presenting their projects to the community and all are invited to attend.**

**Mr. Daft reported these projects are only two out of about 125 senior projects. He commended Dr. Caswell and Ms. Caffrey and Ms. Dione for moving this forward; next year 500 students will move through the program and notices have been sent home and are on the school web site to inform parents. Mr. Daft reported that grants have been pursued to obtain the technology to support the graduation requirement program.**

**Hearings - None**

**Reading of Communications – None**

**Report of Superintendent and Staff**

**FY 2006-07 Financial Report – Dr. Forbes reported that a joint School Committee and City Council meeting was held the previous night; the School Department is committed to balancing the budget for 2006-07 based on experience to date; however, she cautioned that we are only four months into the fiscal year, special education tuitions and health insurance claims fluctuate tremendously, and ultimately will determine whether or not we have a deficit. All expenditures are being cut back and the budget frozen on all non-essentials; residency requirements are being enforced, advertising streamlined and only economically prudent professional development is being allowed.**

**Dr. Forbes advised that the budget is balanced to date. Mr. Faria asked Dr. Forbes to explain going from \$270,000 in the hole to a zero balance since the last statement. Dr. Forbes related that students are in and out of schools constantly and special education tuitions are monitored by the Special Education Director and Finance Director very carefully. Mr. Faria asked about the successes with students who do not live here.**

**Dr. Forbes reported that during the 2007-08 fiscal year, the School Department and City are facing an impending financial crisis, which she has to define “as a crucial time.” Many other districts in RI are facing similar financial problems caused by a local cap on appropriations at 5.25%. In addition, the East Providence City Council voted last October on a new local appropriation cap of 3.5% and these two caps have caused a problem. There are current contractual obligations in excess of those caps and a rise in health care and pensions of which we have no control over. The anticipated obligations exceed those caps. Special education is expected to rise, along with utilities and transportation. This presents a crisis as our obligations exceed the cap. A five-year facilities plan, to be presented at a public meeting on March 21, 2007, lists the present needs of our aging facilities and the City Council needs to be informed regarding the state of our school buildings. We are replacing the high school heating system, which is over one million dollars and will cause a significant increase to the debt service line. Dr. Forbes reviewed the anticipated revenue increases; the total**

projected revenue increase for fiscal year 2007-08 of \$2,438,651 and Anticipated Total expenditure Increase of \$5,387,000, which produces a shortfall of just under \$3 million (\$2,948,349). Dr. Forbes reviewed possible solutions such as asking City Council to allow us to operate under the state cap, which is probably not going to happen; encouraging legislators to revise mandates and to address other reforms in educational funding, seek relief from unions, legislators and RIDE. There has been no vote yet to give us any additional funds and all are encouraged to call their legislators. An agreement exists between the School Department and the City Council to try to find ways to consolidate services. We could also ask the City Manager to transfer debt service to the City side of the budget in 2009. Dr. Forbes will continue to work with the city, but there is also a need for an adequate formula to fund education in RI, which is in the hands of the General Assembly. Dr. Forbes called it is a time to problem solve.

Dr. Forbes explained that she is aware of the rumors which have been circulating and that any proposals will be put out in April to the School Committee, who would like to hear from the community. She does not want children to be upset about any crisis. Dr. Forbes read a letter which will be sent out to all parents. She promised an appropriate forum to discuss proposals and she will do everything possible to get through this financial crisis together; the School Committee will look at multiple options.

**Awarding of Bids – Dr.Hilton asked that the School Committee approve awarding a bid for fall athletic supplies totaling \$5,066.35 as follows:**

**GLS \$ 489.31**

**Grogan Marciano \$1,553.76**

**Sports Supply Group \$ 176.95**

**Anthem \$ 562.93**

**Mobil Sports \$1,157.90**

**Riddell \$1,125.50**

**Motion by Mr. Medeiros to approve, seconded by Mrs. Lovett. Vote 5-0.**

**Personnel Recommendations – Diane Rodericks presented the following personnel items:**

## **APPOINTMENTS**

**Henry McCormick Custodian – EPHS nights**

**Joanne Pimentel Custodian – EPHS nights (temporary)**

**Emilia Vieira Supervisory Assistant, Waddington opening)**

**Michael J. Solitro, Jr Baseball Coach MMS**

**John Gorham Head Coach Boys' Tennis EPHS**

**Michael Lefort Assistant JV Baseball Coach, EPHS**

**Bob Dickerman    Head Freshman Baseball, EPHS**

**Motion: Mr. Medeiros/Second: Mrs. Lovett.**

**Discussion regarding two custodial positions which are replacement positions, not new positions. Mr. Santos questioned discussion with City Council about consolidating services and the fact that it does not make sense to fill these positions now. Mrs. Morris related that the money is in the budget for these position, the high school is short on manpower, and it is not fair to stretch out the employees who work there. Mr. Faria said he is not keen on filling these positions right now either. Mr. Medeiros asked if the positions were essential. Dr. Forbes reported these are not new hires; one position will start immediately and another on April 2, 2007. Roll call vote: Mr. Faria, nay; Mrs. Lovett, aye; Mr. Medeiros, aye; Mr. Santos, nay; Mrs. Morris, aye. Motion carried 3-2 to approve appointments. Mr. Faria noted that he voted against first two appointments only.**

## **RECALL**

**Jennifer Braga    English Teacher, Martin Middle School**

**Motion: Mrs. Lovett/Second: Mr. Medeiros**

**Roll Call Vote: Mr. Faria, aye; Mrs. Lovett, aye; Mr. Medeiros, aye; Mr. Santos, aye; Mrs. Morris, aye.**

## **RESIGNATION**

**Michael J. Solitro, Jr.    Girls' Track Coach RMS**

**Motion: Mr. Medeiros/Second: Mrs. Lovett. Vote 5-0.**

## **FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE (Maternity)**

**Susana Pimentel Music Teacher, Special Subjects**

**Approx. April 23, 2007**

**Jennifer Benell Speech-Language Pathologist**

**May 14, 2007 to end of 2007-2008**

**School Year**

**Motion: Mr. Medeiros/Second: Mrs. Lovett. Vote 5-0.**

## **JOB SHARE**

**Joanne Hall (currently Gr. 2 Grade 2, Kent Heights School**

**Kent Heights) and Rachel DeCosta 2007-2008 School Year**

**(on leave from Grade 3, Oldham)**

**Motion: Mr. Medeiros/Second: Mr. Faria. Vote 5-0.**

## **LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Sophia Sotis Spanish Teacher, High School**

**School Year 07-08 (Year 2)**

**Motion: Mr. Medeiros/Second: Mrs. Lovett. Vote 5-0.**

**Facilities Update – Mr. Barilla reported the following: Wall, benches and handrails in the pool area at the High School have been painted**



and RISE is continuing to replace the lights in the classrooms. Progress is being made on the heating system; steam traps have been completed on the second floor, first floor is nearly complete, basement work will follow. In addition, the heat exchange in the kitchen area will be fixed and the drawing for the demolition and the new work plan have been submitted and are under review. The old stairs at the front entrance to Silver Spring School were removed during the February vacation. New signs were installed by the Highway-Traffic Department prohibiting food or drink in auditorium and gymnasium areas at the High School, Martin and Riverside Middle Schools. Mr. Barilla also provided an update regarding tactical training which took place during the February school recess; the East Providence Police Department hosted a three day training event by the National Tactical Officers Association, which provided instruction to twenty law enforcement agencies related to school safety.

**Requests for Home Schooling – Mr. Rodericks requested approval of two requests. A motion was made by Mr. Medeiros, seconded by Mrs. Lovett to approve. Vote 5-0.**

**Field Trip Requests – A motion was made by Mr. Medeiros to approve a field trip request presented by Mr. Riley of Martin Middle School for students to participate in a two-day visit to the URI Alton Jones Campus on May 7th and 8th, seconded by Mr. Faria. Vote 5-0. Discussion took place regarding how the trip aligns with school**

curriculum and the number of chaperones who will be supervising students.

A second field trip request was made by Mrs. Caffrey and Mrs. Dionne for DECA Gold Medal winners (Career and Technical School students) to attend and participate in the International Career Development Conference from April 28-May2, 2007. Nine students and two advisors will be attending this annual competition/conference. Motion was made by Mr. Medeiros to approve, seconded by Mr. Faria. Vote 5-0. Mr. Faria requested that students be recognized at a future meeting.

2007-2008 School Calendar – A motion was made by Mrs. Lovett to approve the calendar as presented, seconded by Mr. Faria. Vote 5-0.

Student-Athlete Handbook – Mr. Amaral, Athletic Director and Mr. Glen Piros, Assistant Principal requested approval of the revised Student Athlete Handbook, which incorporates requirements for student behavior on and off campus, and aligns with the school handbook. Mr. Amaral related that participation in athletics is considered a privilege and to be part of a team, students must maintain good moral conduct in the eyes of the greater community in addition to the school community. Mr. Piros concurred that promotion of the revised handbook is a proactive approach to promote a safe culture, keep the student/athletes on track, and to help parents. It is also aligned with the Rhode Island Interscholastic

**guidelines and rules. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Faria to approve, seconded by Mr. Medeiros. Roll call vote: Mr. Faria, aye; Mrs. Lovett, aye; Mr. Medeiros, aye; Mr. Santos, aye; Mrs. Morris, aye. Mr. Amaral will ensure that everyone is informed regarding these new standards**

**Report of Sub-Committees - School Security – No report.**

**Finance – Mr. Medeiros reported that he attended a meeting on March 7, 2007 at CCRI regarding property tax relief and information on the 5 1/2% tax cap. Also, Mr. Medeiros advised that various finance sub-committee meetings will be held on May 16, 17, 24 and 30th; dates and other information will be listed on the school department website. Mr. Faria described the format of the meetings, guidelines and how the budget is built from the bottom up. After the sub-committee meetings are completed, one final meeting will be held for discussion. Mr. Faria stated that he is proud of the process the subcommittee has developed as the meetings are being held to provide public access in the best way possible.**

**Mrs. Morris advised that she has attended meetings of the Wellness Committee, which is looking into more ways for students to become physically active. Senator Moura is researching additional grant money for the schools.**

**Unfinished Business - None**

## **New Business**

**V.A.21 Suicide Crisis Policy – Sharon Waterman, Director of Special Services and Ellen Reinhardt were present to answer questions and to request first passage of this important and necessary policy. A motion was made by Mr. Faria to accept first passage, seconded by Mrs. Lovett. Vote 5-0.**

### **Payment of Bills**

#### **Local Operating Bill List:**

**Warrant #000719 2/28/07 \$1,234,616.95**

**Motion: Mr. Santos/Second: Mr. Faria. Vote 5-0.**

#### **Federal Bill List:**

**Warrant #000716 2/15/07 \$ 137,632.06**

**Motion: Mr. Faria/Second: Mr. Medeiros. Vote 5-0.**

### **Question and Answer Period**

**Antone Gouveia suggested strongly that the issue that parents are her for should be heard first. He related that about eight years ago, the Superintendent spoke about rumors and two weeks later two schools were closed; Riverside was impacted then. He understands the financial impact, but rumors start when data is being collected. He has an idea about what will be proposed and asked that the School Committee not blame the community for rumors which they**

started; this has happened before and he thinks it will be the Riverside parents who might be impacted by the consolidation. He said these are all recycled ideas such as moving grade six and consolidating middle schools. He asked that the School Committee be honest with parents and hopes this topic will be first on the agenda in April.

Connie Crowshaw, a teacher at Riverside Middle School, said she is a Townie, educated in East Providence, and that her parents care. She thanked Dr. Forbes for addressing this on the April agenda and hopes this is not a done deal as parents pay taxes too. She will take Dr. Forbes' word on this and asked the School Committee for ongoing input before hand and a written document before hand involving any consolidation so that parents can be educated and informed in advance. She stated that we are not talking about a building, but a community and students cannot be warehoused. People here have ownership of their school and participate in their schools. This is not a business; some kids need their connection to their school; massing kids together causes them to lose their identity.

Mrs. Morris recommended having a separate meeting for this issue, which parents can attend. Dr. Forbes will look into that; she will be presenting information to the School Committee first.

Mr. Faria commented that every proposal needs to be analyzed and he is not making light of anything. He cannot comment until he sees

any proposals and he asked parents to be patient. The budget period is November 1st and he does not want to talk about proposals he does not yet have. Mr. Faria is also looking forward to meetings to keep parents informed along the way.

Mrs. Morris asked for support at budget time and not just when there is a problem.

Kathy Blackmar has been at Riverside Middle School for 16 years and is a concerned parent; she believes that students and staff have been upset by seeing people measuring and talking and they don't know what is happening. She heard this is a done deal; and she hopes the truth is being spoken. Most children were already affected when they were at Waddington and now it might happen again at middle school. She asked for a second meeting to discuss issues and to put parents at ease. This is a huge issue and parents want to be heard; if everyone works together, we can make a great decision.

Robert Enos of the League of Concerned voters, considers the School Committee as the Board of Directors and the Superintendent as the CEO, citizens and taxpayers as stockholders. He is proud of our high performing high school, but he had five issues of concern: test scores, first quarter budget, principals, buybacks and the breakfast program. He cannot believe that he cannot be on the agenda. He asked for reactions on schools being below the state average and what should be done.

**Dr. Forbes advised that we would like our scores to improve, but comparisons should be done with other urban ring school districts, not the entire state. Because of the demographics, it would be more of a comparison. She said that this is only the second year of NECAP testing and all School Improvement Teams and principals are working under the direction of Mr. Daft on School Improvement Plans and we will continually look for ways to improve scores.**

**Mr. Enos related that it is not about rewarding high performing teachers and getting rid of those who are not performing; it is his opinion that the School Committee is hiring friends and special interest people. His league will look into anyone on these two committees who participate in negotiations.**

**Mrs. Morris said this is already being addressed and the School Committee is different from the City Council agenda regarding placing items on the agenda.**

**Mr. Faria and Mr. Santos said that Mr. Grammit of the RI Ethics Commission will come out to make presentations to all boards, committees, etc. and the School Committee needs to be careful about commenting as it may infringe on open meeting law.**

**Mr. Faria said an effort has been made to get information to the public and he is very excited about facilitating those meetings and proud of**

**what the Finance Sub-Committee is trying to accomplish.**

**Mr. Enos disagrees with the method of budgeting and reporting which he thinks is an antiquated way of reporting to taxpayers and that in addition to expenses and income for the month, a year to date should be provided.**

**Mrs. Morris said the services of the Superintendent, Finance Director and secretary are being used continually for information requests, which takes them away from their work and when they are not working for the School Department, it is costing the taxpayers money when they are busy researching continual requests.**

**Mr. Enos asked why the School Committee did not go forward with litigation on the buyback issue when the City Council voted 3-2 to move forward and he asked about the \$600,000; he criticized the School Committee for changing their vote on the breakfast program without new data; he wants every child to have breakfast free and he asked for one of the School Committee members to put it back on the agenda.**

**Bob Carlin of Merit Road asked about access to policy book, for the agenda to allow people to speak, and new member training from RIASC, which all School Committee attended.**

**Patti Streit, asked about report on technology and when the scanners**



will be in the high school for the E-Portfolio projects. She would like to see things in that we need and when will they be in the schools able to be used by students and teachers. Mrs. Streit said that a whole class year has been lost already. Student Council voted for it and kids are pulling for it; but we should be doing it first. Her daughter told her about a presentation at a Student Council meeting to get money from the kids for scanners. She asked what has happened in a month.

Mr. Daft advised that equipment is ordered as the funding comes through, and the scanners should be ordered. Dr. Forbes promised to work with the Technology Director, Ms. Fox to look into the process.

Adjournment at 10:10PM Motion by Mrs. Lovett, seconded by Mr. Santos. Vote 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A. Iannelli, Administrative Assistant

Eileen Lovett, Clerk of the Committee